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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Presse Embleme Campagne, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Journalists need protection in Ukraine

The Press Emblem Campaign draws the attention of the Human Rights Council on the situation of journalists and media workers in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the civil unrests last November, hundreds of cases of different kind of violence against journalists and media workers have been reported; three journalists have lost their lives, the last one being killed on the same day of writing this contribution (24 May 2014).

Like in other countries where violent and armed confrontation prevails, in Ukraine too journalists and media workers are targeted physically and psychologically and have become victims of different forms of violence, torture and killing.

While in the period 2005 to 2010, the independence of the media in Ukraine increased and legislative measures allowed the establishment of a safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers, since 2010 the situation has constantly deteriorated leading to an atmosphere of diffused self-censorship.

The political crisis erupted last November, which turned into an internal armed conflict, has had a dramatic impact on the working conditions of journalists.

According to different reliable sources, hundreds of local and international journalists and media workers were wounded during the mass protests that took place in Kiev and other localities; when attacked by protestors, the security forces did not protect them; sometimes the victims were deliberately targeted by governmental forces although they were readily recognizable as media workers.

An increasing number of broadcasting (TV and radio) stations and newspapers have also been targeted by armed groups and the facilities have been damaged, broken or stolen; some have been banned from broadcasting and even closed down. Journalists and media workers have been victims of brutality, threatened, harassed and beaten, forced to resign; some have been deported, kidnapped, abducted or detained by different armed groups or the governmental forces. Often their equipment is seized.

An increasing number of journalists and media workers are banned from entry into Ukraine or Crimea, although they are duly accredited by the State authorities.

Recommendations

The Press Emblem Campaign calls on:

- the Ukrainian and Russian authorities to ensure journalists and media workers can carry out their duty freely and to bring to justice those responsible for the offences and crimes committed against journalists and media workers;
- a prompt and independent investigation on the circumstances which led to the murder of the italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian translator on May 24 near Slavyansk;
- the Human Rights Council to consider innovative initiative conducive to a better protection for journalists and media workers in situations of violent or armed confrontation.